



CHRIS BERTELSEN PHOTO

Sullivan County accountant Jeff Graham (foreground) answers questions from Rep. Peter Franklin, D-Newport (background) during a special meeting of the county delegation on Monday.

# Delegation disputes budget

## Some reps say county is headed toward a deficit; others say that's not the case

By AARON ALDRIDGE  
Staff Writer

Sullivan County accountant Jeff Graham was grilled for more than three hours over the current status of the county budget during a special meeting of the county delegation Monday.

**Newport** "It's an absolute waste of time," said state representative and delegation member Beverly Rodeschin, R-Newport. "I really don't think we're going to have a deficit."

Manager Ed Gil de Rubio walked out of the last delegation meeting in disgust on May 14 after delegation chairman Rep. Peter Franklin, D-Newport, told Gil de Rubio he had an issue with him and that he was incompetent.

Rodeschin said she thinks Franklin is looking for inequities in the budget that don't exist.

"He's on a witch-hunt," Rodeschin said. "What was all this for? He's trying to find something that isn't there."

Graham presented the delegation with a 25-page financial statement outlining the county's current finan-

cial status.

"The reason to put this budget report together was to see if there were any places that could be cut in the fourth quarter," Graham said.

Delegation member Rep. Tom Donovan, D-Claremont, accused Graham of using several different accounting practices to confuse the issues, and Franklin agreed.

"Do you have some backup material to show that you know what you're doing?" Franklin asked Graham.

Graham responded by telling Franklin the statement was only meant to be a source document.

Delegation member Rep. James Phinizy, D-Acworth, said only about \$7 million of the \$9.5 million in the county

See **BUDGET** - Page A8

budget has been spent through the first three quarters of the fiscal year and he believes the budget will be balanced.

"It looks like, relatively speaking, we're pretty much on target," Phinizy said.

But Franklin disagreed.

"We've got to figure this out line by line to see where we'll be over budget," Franklin said. "We only have until June 30. We can't dillydally. We've been dillydallying for a long time."

Franklin requested more

details about the budget from Graham and where county money is being spent.

"These numbers are less than helpful," Franklin said. "What we're interested in is what's going to be paid out."

Graham said he could not look into the future and see the final budget numbers for the fiscal year.

"If I knew what was going to happen in the future, I'd be at the New York Stock Exchange right now," Graham said.

After two hours of speaking with Graham, the county commissioners and Gil de Rubio excused themselves to attend a scheduled county budget meeting.

As the meeting continued, Franklin asked Graham if a freeze should be placed on spending in the county.

"I don't see any need for a freeze," Graham said.

Franklin was unable to unearth any major inconsistencies in the budget and recessed

the meeting until June 4 at 9 a.m. He did not specify where the meeting will take place.

"I think we need to have some honesty in budgeting," Franklin said. "It hasn't in the past."

Other delegation members appeared to agree with Franklin; and Rep. Sue Gottling, D-Sunapee, wants more information than was presented by Graham.

"I don't want to micromanage, necessarily, but in a way we have to," Gottling said.